Figure 001. Virgin and Child, after an original by Donatello, mid 15th century. Stucco and colored glass (in halo). H. 45 x W. 28 in., 113lb. (114.3 x 71.1 cm, 51.2565kg). Metropolitan Museum of Art, From the Collection of James Stillman, Gift of Dr. Ernest G. Stillman, 1922, accession number 22.16.3, link to item on museum’s website: <https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/194856>. This is a stucco copy of a marble original by Donatello (Figure 002). Unfortunately the photograph is in black and white so we lose some of the detail, but the material qualities of this stucco piece are clear, especially when compared with the marble original. Unlike the original, however, this copy has a gothic-style arch, indicating that it was changed according to the copier or patron’s artistic preferences, which reflects stucco’s versatility as a material for making ephemeral art.

Figure 002. Pazzi Madonna, Donatello, ca. 1422. Marble. Gemäldegalerie (Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz). ID number: Lid-0042. The Pazzi Madonna inspired multiple copies in stucco and terracotta.

Figure 003. Wheat stucco. Made 11/30/17, photographed 12/18/17. The author-practitioner warns that wheat flour produces more brittle stucco. After a couple of weeks of sitting in the open air in the lab, the wheat-based stucco was very fragile and broke apart on moving. The cracking around the edge of the flour was likely a result of the stucco expanding, then contracting, a few days after being made. None of the other stucco mixtures expanded and contracted, so this process was possibly caused by an interaction between the wheat flour and the tragacanth gum. The other stucco piece pictured did not crack as severely, but became wrinkled and lost much of its form.

Figure 004. Rye stucco. Made 11/30/17, photographed 12/4/17. Pictured are both the wheat flour stucco (left, whiter) before it fell apart, and the rye flour stucco (right, brown). The rye flour stucco did not break apart further after reaching this state, but the tree molded stucco has broken slightly and did not take the imprint as clearly. The author-practitioner writes that it should be coated in glue to be painted, but preliminary experiments on painting stucco revealed that this might not be absolutely necessary for rye stucco (see figure 005).

Figure 005. Chalk and Plaster of Paris stucco. Made 11/29/17, photographed 12/11/17. The chalk-based stucco is on the left side, and the plaster of Paris stucco is on the right. Both took the imprints very well, but the chalk has visible cracks on its surface whereas the plaster of Paris is still smooth and solid.

Figure 006. Painted Stucco. Made 10/17/17, photographed 12/11/17. As there are multiple painted pieces in this photo, each will be listed according to their location:

Top left, star-shaped stucco: made of rye flour, coated with rabbit skin glue, painted with linseed oil and verdigris.

Top right, cone seashell-shaped stucco: made of rye flour, uncoated, painted with linseed oil and verdigris.

Center, seashell shaped stucco: made of rye flour, coated with rabbit skin glue and (chalk-based) gesso, painted with linseed oil and verdigris.

Center right, round stucco: made of chalk, uncoated, painted with linseed oil and verdigris.

Center bottom, ocean wave motif stucco: made of rye flour, uncoated, left side painted with burgundy red ochre and linseed oil, right side painted with burgundy red ochre and egg white.

For the rye flour stucco, coating it with gesso to make it whiter resulted in a solid-colored and shiny painted stucco. Rabbit skin glue uniformly made the painted stucco more shiny and the paint more uniform. The chalk stucco in the photo could have benefitted from rabbit skin glue coating, as the paint was lumpy in places Please see the associated field note entry for further discussion of the painted stucco: <https://making-and-knowing.wikischolars.columbia.edu/Stucco+annotation+-+painting+stucco>.